Secretary to the Prime Minister, reiterated France's support to India for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Discussions during the Sixth Round of the Indo-French Strategic Dialogue covered a wide range of issues including international, regional and bilateral matters of mutual concern and developments in Asia and Europe. The discussions were part of the effort at bringing the relationship between India and France to a higher level.

Issuance of passports in NER

3700. SHRI NABAM REBIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of passports issued by Passport offices in NER during the last three years, year-wise and passport office-wise;

(b) the details of the applications pending in the passport offices for issuance of passport during the last six months; and

(c) the effective measures being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAMRAJU) : (a) The passport applications from applicants in North-Eastern Region are dealt with by

(i) Regional Passport Office, Guwahati and (ii) Regional Passport Office, Calcutta (in respect of applicants at Passport Application Collection Centre, Agartala.)

The details of passports issued at these two offices are as follows:

Year	RPO Guwahati	RPO Calcutta (in respect of PACC Agartala)
1998	12859	410
1999	14001	693
2000	14960	1013

(b) and (c) As of end March 2001 there were 50 applications at

RPO Guwahati and 144 at RPO Calcutta (in respect of PACC Agartala) pending issue of passports where police verification reports have been received and the applications are complete in all respects.

The prescribed time taken for issue of a passport is 35 days from the date of receipt of the application. However, due to various reasons such as delay in receipt of police verification reports and incomplete information from applicants, the time taken for issue of passports may exceed 35 days. The issue of passports at various Passport Offices is monitored through periodic returns on weekly basis and those Passport Offices which have pendency are directed to take measure to clear the same.

Israel's response over Jammu and Kashmir terrorism

3701. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 11th January, 2001 captioned "Israel willing to exchange notes with India over Jammu and Kashmir terrorism"; and

(b) if so, the details of the matter reported therein and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAMRAJU) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) India and Israel have agreed to establish a dialogue on counter terrorism. Details are being worked out by the concerned authorities in the two countries.